



## teaming up to wipe out graffiti...

A number of local agencies are teaming up to combine resources to reduce and remove graffiti in the San Antonio area.

**City of San Antonio** is tackling the graffiti problem through a number of different departments. These departments utilize existing resources as well as volunteers to remove graffiti in parks, on streets and in neighborhoods.

**Parks and Recreation** removes graffiti in San Antonio's 185 parks and 20 designated street corridors or hot spots. Through the use of restitution workers and volunteers, the City saves more than \$3 million a year in labor costs to clean up graffiti in parks and park facilities. Parks and Recreation encourages citizens to volunteer their time to help with graffiti removal or pledge donations to the program for additional tools. For more information on volunteer projects or donations, call **207-8452**.

**Public Works** removes graffiti from sidewalks, traffic signs, retaining walls and streets and responds to graffiti reported by citizens via the City's 311 customer service number or reported by other departments. The department also uses adult and juvenile restitutioners to clean up graffiti. Public Works removes more than 151,000 square feet of graffiti (4 football fields) per year. Additionally, 1500 gallons of concrete paint and 5000 gallons of recycled paint are used by the department to remove graffiti.

**Environmental Services** through its Household Hazardous Waste Facility at 7030 Culebra Road, offers free recycled and reusable paint for graffiti removal projects. The facility is open each Thursday, 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.; each Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; and the first Saturday of every month, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Keep San Antonio Beautiful partners with Environmental Services

to coordinate volunteer and neighborhood community improvement projects including graffiti abatement. Interested citizens should call **207-6460** for more information.

**Office of Cultural Affairs** offers free one-hour mural workshops to neighborhood and community groups. Murals are a creative and empowering option to painting over graffiti because they beautify your neighborhood and are a deterrent to future graffiti. A community mural can establish ownership of the art piece among neighborhood residents and help to restore community pride. For information on mural workshops, call **207-6965**.

**San Antonio Police Department** utilizes San Antonio Fear Free Environment (SAFFE) officers assigned to specific areas or neighborhoods to work closely with residents and district patrol officers to prevent graffiti. SAFFE officers attempt to establish and maintain day-to-day interaction with residents and businesses to prevent crimes like graffiti before they occur. SAFFE officers also act as liaisons with other City agencies, work closely with schools and youth programs, coordinate graffiti-removal activities, and serve as resources to residents who wish to take back their neighborhoods from crime and decay.

**Code Compliance** has two roles in the Graffiti Wipe Out Program. Through its Dangerous Premises Team, graffiti is abated on an average of 75 vacant structures annually as part of the cleaning and securing process of privately-owned vacant structures. Through this program, graffiti is removed from these vacant structures through a City contractor and/or by the owner. On the community service side, the Code Compliance ICE (Intensive Code Enforcement) Program, in collaboration with the Police Department's SAFFE Program, utilizes Code Officers to supervise probationers and restitutioners on graffiti removal projects throughout the community.

**Neighborhood Action** through the Neighborhood Target Sweep Program, continues to provide support to residents and communities in their efforts to create clean, safe, and healthy neighborhoods. Within 24 annual neighborhood sweeps, Neighborhood Action Department (NAD) staff coordinates efforts with volunteers from local schools, neighborhood organizations and other areas. These efforts, generated by input from residents and neighborhood leaders, include graffiti abatement, alley cleanup, house painting for the elderly and physically disabled, and vacant lot abatement. Supplies and materials for these efforts come from the City's Paint Bank and supplies from community donations. The Neighborhood Sweep Program empowers residents to devise neighborhood-based problem solving plans to address graffiti and other issues identified in their community.

**Bexar County** and its Infrastructure Services Department works to eradicate graffiti whenever found or reported. Using available products, staff attempts to remove it or, in most cases, paint over it. If graffiti is found on public signs, removal is attempted or the signs are replaced. The Sheriff's Department apprehends graffiti offenders and works with Infrastructure Services and the District Attorney's Office to estimate the cost of graffiti removal. The District Attorney's Office then charges the offender for the cost of the removal. The County's Juvenile Probation Department partners with the City's Parks and Recreation and the Public Works Departments to utilize juvenile offenders for graffiti cleanup as part of their restitution.

**City Public Service** (CPS) regards graffiti as an important safety issue. When spray paint is found on electrical or gas equipment, the situation can become dangerous. CPS urges citizens to call **353-2222** if graffiti is found on any CPS equipment or property. Citizens should not try to clean the area themselves. CPS has specialized crews that are familiar with electrical or gas equipment to ensure that graffiti is safely removed.

**San Antonio Water System** (SAWS) is committed to removing graffiti from its facilities within seven days from the date of occurrence. SAWS urges all citizens to help their public agencies control the problem by immediately reporting any graffiti activity to the appropriate authorities. SAWS can be reached at 704-SAWS.

**VIA Metropolitan Transit** is responsible for graffiti removal on VIA facilities, bus shelters, benches and on buses. Graffiti can be found on seats or even etched into bus windows. Tagged VIA property should be reported to **362-2020**. VIA maintains shelters up to three times a week and makes special maintenance calls and repairs as needed. Through the Adopt-A-Bus-Shelter Program, corporate, group, or individual volunteers are responsible for assisting with the upkeep of a bus shelter between VIA's scheduled maintenance and are encouraged to notify VIA of vandalism that may take place on those shelters. For information on how to adopt a shelter, call VIA's Public Affairs Office at **362-2370**.

**Texas Department of Transportation** (TxDOT) has four maintenance sections in San Antonio that are responsible for the maintaining all state highways within the city limits. One of the many responsibilities is the removal of graffiti from the state right-of-way. Supervisors and work crews patrol the sections daily and take note of newly-placed graffiti. Locations are listed and prioritized and plans are then made to have the graffiti removed as soon as possible. TxDOT's goal is to remove graffiti within 30 days. In the event the traveling public should spot graffiti along the highway, they should contact the TxDOT District Office at **615-5856** to report the location. We will then forward that information to the appropriate maintenance office for further action.



## Graffiti... Don't live with it. Wipe it out!

Graffiti is ugly. It comes in all shapes and colors and can be found on buildings, highways, fences and other surfaces. It's done without permission and it's against the law. Graffiti is an eyesore that decreases property values, is a drain on tax dollars and makes residents feel unsafe.

The City and other local agencies, through the Graffiti Wipeout Program, are doing a number of things to decrease this vandalism. But what can you do? Get involved. Report graffiti in progress or graffiti that needs to be painted over. Organize a neighborhood paint out or learn how to create a community mural. Donate paint brushes, rollers or other materials. You can start by learning more about graffiti and its effect on the community by going online at [www.sanantonio.gov/graffiti](http://www.sanantonio.gov/graffiti).

### graffiti... it's a crime

San Antonio treats graffiti as a crime, not a prank. Below is a general summary of state and local anti-graffiti laws and ordinances.

#### State Laws

*Texas Penal Code §28.08* makes it a crime to intentionally or knowingly make markings with aerosol paint, indelible marker or an etching or engraving device on tangible property without consent of the owner. Markings can include inscriptions, slogans, drawings or paintings. Penalties are assessed based on the amount of loss suffered by the property owner and may range from fines up to \$2000 and/or confinement for up to 180 days, up to fines of \$10,000 and/or confinement for 5 to 99 years.


#### City Codes

*City Code §21-32* makes it a crime for retailers to sell or transfer spray paint to any person under the age of eighteen (18). Violators may be fined up to \$500.00 per offense.


*City Code §21-37* makes it a crime for retailers to openly display or store aerosol paint from a counter or other location open to the public. Violators may be fined up to \$500.00 per offense.

*City Code §21-6* makes it a crime for any person to have a graffiti implement in their possession while on public grounds or public buildings when such locations are closed to the public or on private property when that property is not open to the public. Parents of children under the age of 17 may be cited for allowing a child to violate this provision of the code. Violators may be fined not less than \$50.00 nor more than \$500.00 dollars for each violation. Second and subsequent offenses may not be fined less than \$100.00 nor more than \$500.00 per violation.

## 10 ways to wipe out graffiti

 **Get educated.** Learn about graffiti, how it impacts your community, and who is responsible for graffiti prevention and clean up in San Antonio. Call 311 or Environmental Services/Keep San Antonio Beautiful (KSAB), **207-6460**.

 **Report graffiti to the appropriate authorities.** Call **911** if a graffiti act is currently in progress. Call **311** if a graffiti act has already been committed.


 **Organize a paint-out.** Free paint is available through the City's Household Hazardous Waste Facility, 7030 Culebra Road. Also, local paint companies may donate paint and brushes for graffiti cleanup projects. Call Environmental Services, **207-6440**.

 **Plan a mural to cover a wall plagued by graffiti.** Call the City's Office of Cultural Affairs, **222-ARTS**.

 **Coordinate a graffiti awareness campaign at your school or in the community.** Call Environmental Services/Keep San Antonio Beautiful, **207-6460** or Public Works, **207-5621**.

 **Plant trees or other greenery** near a graffiti-plagued wall.

 **Property owners are advised to install lighting** in areas that are dark and often hit with graffiti.

 **Pick up a paintbrush** and volunteer with departments that do graffiti abatement projects. Call Environmental Services/Keep San Antonio Beautiful, **207-6460** or Parks and Recreation, **207-8452** or Public Works, **207-5621**.

 **Organize a crime prevention group** in your neighborhood. Call Police SAFTE Officers:

- Central, 207-7413  
- East, 207-7566  
- North, 207-8350

- Prue, 207-7169  
- South, 207-8964  
- West, 207-7421

 **Donate paint, brushes, rollers and other materials** for graffiti abatement. Call Environmental Services/KSAB, **207-6460**.

